



COMMUNITY VOICES

By Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart.

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Hazelwood School District rises to the challenge

As we brought this school year to a close, the sight of 1,100 Hazelwood School District graduates receiving their diplomas and walking across the stage demonstrates HSD pride and makes us HSD proud! This year, we set our sights on implementing the Hazelwood NOW Strategic Plan to better support our 18,000 students through program enhancements, redistricting and fiscal responsibility.

At any point across the spectrum, I believe we are meeting this challenge through the first and second goals in our Strategic Plan: (1) improve student achievement, and (2) differentiate and expand resources and services for students. For instance, our district earned 86.8 percent of the total performance points possible in Missouri's accountability system, and our 2019 graduating senior class earned more than \$40 million in scholarships while contributing more than 112,000 hours of community service.

In addition, we have expanded access to early childhood education and continue to add new classrooms. In fact, pre-K enrollment across the district is up about

20 percent from this time a year ago. We also remain excited about and invested in the creation of two academic acceleration models: HSD's 8th Grade Middle School Center and the Opportunity Center. Both programs have reshaped access to quality education alternatives for our exceptional students. Our 8th Grade Center offers access to academic career pathways in technology and health sciences. The Opportunity Center connects students and community partners in smaller settings where counseling and restorative practices further support student learning and engagement in an accelerated academic model.

We are maintaining fiscal responsibility by redistricting for the first time in more than a decade. This process allows us to assess our projected enrollment and maximize capacity in our schools. For our community, it means we're able to optimize our transportation efforts and ensure we can continue to focus on providing the most-effective learning environments for students.

Just as a graduating class leaves our dis-

trict, young minds throughout the community are preparing for their first day of school in August. I'm grateful for the completion of another wonderful school year and look forward to the very strategic and purposeful work still ahead. I hope you, our community, will continue to challenge the Hazelwood School District to provide our students with a culture of high expectations and excellence and to shape them into lifelong learners. We will rise to that challenge, and I anticipate great things ahead in the coming year.

Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart is the proud Superintendent of Schools for the Hazelwood School District serving approximately 18,000 students in the second-largest district in St. Louis County and seventh-largest district in Missouri.



The opinions expressed in this column are the columnist's alone and do not reflect the opinion of the owners or staff of *Community News*.

COMMUNITY NEWS



2019

Back-to-School Community Fair

Saturday, July 27 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Central/East/West - 3 corridors, 1 date

Central High School

Central Middle
North Middle
Barrington
Brown
Cold Water
Jana
Jamestown
Jury
Townsend
Central ECE
GALACTIC

East High School

East Middle
Southeast Middle
Arrowpoint
Grannemann
Keeven
Larimore
Twillman
East ECE
Opportunity Center

West High School

Northwest Middle
West Middle
Armstrong
Garrett
Lawson
Lusher
McCurdy
McNair
Russell
Walker
West ECE

Free and open to the entire HSD community!

Free backpacks and school supplies, until exhausted

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The Independent News

Back-to-School Fair July 27

The Hazelwood School District will host its annual Back-to-School Corridor Community Fair on July 27 at each of its three high schools from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Students and families should attend at the high school for the district corridor in which they reside. All HSD schools will host booths with giveaways and important information about uniforms, school supplies, clubs, activities, and more.

There will be free backpacks and school supplies, while supplies last, provided by local Fire Protection Districts. Families also can get information from various District departments and about immunizations. The event is free and open to HSD students in all grades and their families. All GALACTIC students should attend at Central High School; all East Middle School and Opportunity Center students should attend at East High School.




**2019
Back-to-School
Community Fair**

Free and open
to the entire
HSD community!

**Saturday, July 27
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

Central/East/West
3 corridors, 1 date

| Central High School | East High School | West High School |
|---|--|---|
| Central Middle North Middle Barrington Brown Cold Water Jana Jamestown Jury Townsend | East Middle Southeast Middle Arrowpoint Grinnemann Keaven Larimore Twilman | Northwest Middle West Middle Armstrong Garrett Lawson Lusher McCurdy McHair Russell Walker |
| Central Early Childhood Education GALACTIC/Gifted Education <small>(GALACTIC students/parents from all three corridors should go to Central HS)</small> | East Early Childhood Education Hazelwood Opportunity Center <small>(East Middle and Opportunity Center students/parents from all three corridors should go to East HS)</small> | West Early Childhood Education |
|  |  |  |

- All school sites will host booths with information and free giveaways
- Schools will provide details about uniform policies, school supplies, clubs, activities, and more
- Free backpacks and school supplies, until exhausted. Hosted by our local Fire Protection Districts
- Featuring info booths for Communications & Public Relations, Transportation, Child Nutrition Services, Residency, and other District departments
 - Information about immunizations
- Showcase music and dance entertainment by student groups
- Share your Back-to-School Fair photos with us using #HSDBTS

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Conservation Has A Diversity Problem. This St. Louis Program Is Trying To Change That.



Kemet Ajanaku, right, spots an egret near the Audubon Center at Riverlands. Teens learn the basics of environmental conservation, then lead a series of summer camps for elementary schoolers.



Deija Duncan, 17, consults a bird identification guide during a hike at the Audubon Center at Riverlands.

SHAHLA FARZAN | ST. LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO

White, upper-middle-class Americans have held the reins of the mainstream conservation movement for decades — and some say change is long overdue.

A small group of biologists and educators in West Alton are working to jump-start that change through a series of outdoor camps. The Audubon Center at Riverlands' Flight Crew program aims to help more young people of color connect with nature through a series of outdoor camps.

The [eight-week Audubon program](#) trains a small group of north county teenagers in the basics of environmental science, who then pass that knowledge along to elementary-age campers from the Ferguson-Florissant School District.

St. Louis Public Radio's Shahla Farzan tags along on a nature hike with a group of St. Louis teens learning the basics of environmental conservation — and passing that knowledge along to the next generation.

On a recent morning hike in West Alton, the teens gather to observe a velvety white caterpillar inching along a railing. The movement of the tufted insect catches Jamiah Cole's eye.

"It's like a wave going through its body," said Cole, who just finished her sophomore year at McCluer North. Nearby, two other teens cautiously crouch over a fresh pile of dung on the path. Tiny white bone fragments embedded in the scat hint that the original owner was likely a wandering coyote.

Deija Duncan, 17, consults a bird identification guide during a hike at the Audubon Center at Riverlands.

CREDIT SHAHLA FARZAN | ST. LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO

The point is to help them develop a connection with nature, regardless of where their interest lies, said program coordinator Michelle Wiegand. **SEE NEXT PAGE FOR MORE OF THE STORY**

RAVEN GANAWAY, DEIJA DUNCAN & KEMET AJANAKU ARE 2019 EHS ALUMS.

Conservation Has A Diversity Problem. This St. Louis Program Is Trying To Change That.

Cont.

A lot of teens in our region don't spend a lot of time in nature," Wiegand said. "That's part of what this program is all about: getting more comfortable with the outdoors and hopefully developing some passion for it."

The eight teens in this year's program have had a one-month crash course in environmental conservation — including bird identification and Missouri wetland restoration. They're paid for their time, with funding for the program coming from a mix of grant funding and a partnership with STL Youth Jobs.

Alayna Abel, a junior at McCluer North High School, applied because she said she wants to help more kids get excited about the "mystery of science."

"I feel like they should be able to experience nature in the way that I experienced it," said Abel, who grew up exploring her grandparents' property in Troy, Missouri. "The world is just so beautiful around them."

At 16, she's already thinking ahead to potential career options — including one that combines her interest in public health and wildlife conservation. Sometimes, Abel said, her friends and family have a hard time understanding why she's so passionate about the environment.

"They're like, 'Why do you care so much?'" Abel said. "I'm like, 'You don't understand, everything is here for a purpose. That alligator? Here for a purpose. That bird? Here for a purpose.'"

Alayna Abel scans the Alton Slough for waterfowl. The 16-year-old McCluer North junior said she got involved in the program because she wanted to expose more kids to the "mystery of science."

Raven Ganaway, a recent graduate of Hazelwood East High School, is trying to set some manageable goals for herself this summer.

"I have to get used to touching bugs," said Ganaway, now in her second year of the program. "I want to step outside of my comfort zone."

Their training now complete, the teens will soon lead a series of [one-week nature camps](#) for about 100 third-, fourth- and fifth-graders from the Ferguson-Florissant School District.

Many of the kids don't have a chance to experience nature at home, Ganaway said, but at camp they have "acres and acres of space to explore and learn about."

Fellow camp counselor Kemet Ajanaku said the point is to help encourage kids to unplug from technology — even for a little while — and appreciate the world around them.

Ajanaku, who graduated from **Hazelwood East** in June, wasn't always interested in the outdoors.

Now the 19-year-old goes by the camp nickname HOO-dini ("Not like the escape artist, but like an owl") and plans to study sports medicine with an emphasis on homeopathic remedies.

"I can understand how nature runs more at a detailed perspective now, and I can appreciate some of the things where I think I couldn't appreciate it before," Ajanaku said.

Wiegand, the program coordinator, doesn't expect all of the teens and their campers will want to go into careers in science, but she said it's a small step toward supporting more people of color in the field.

"They're getting a broad exposure to different ways to work in nature or in environmental conservation," she said. "Because we all make better decisions when there's a more diverse pool of people at the table trying to solve problems."